

## Nine by Mileventhings

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**Summary:** Something's wrong with El. And Mike's going to find out what. The kids are aged up and are in high school. Featuring Jealous Mike.

## 1. Chapter 1

A/N It's been a really long time since I've posted anything and I'm so so so so sorry but I'm back now, so please bear with me. I'm going to try and continue my other stories too, so make sure you watch out for them! Please leave a review and let me know how I'm doing!

Also this story is T for now but that may change in later chapters.

I do not own Stranger Things or any of these characters!

Mike POV

"Hey!" I wave to El as she walks towards me, leaning next to the bike racks outside our high school.

"Hey." she says stopping in front of me as I lean down to give her a peck on the lips. As I start to lean back, she pulls me in by the t-shirt and deepens the kiss. I don't stop to think about how out of character this public display of affection is for El, I just respond enthusiastically and wrap my arms around her, hugging her in close to me. We stop to take a breath, foreheads touching and her eyes rising up to find mine. Her eyes are perfect. I firmly believe that. El is beautiful but her eyes are my absolute weakness. They're big and brown and innocent and wise all at the same time and when I look at them I feel dizzy and happy and it's like I'm 12 again and I hate blinking and missing even a second of her eyes and... I'm getting off track here.

"What was that for?" I tease, with a smile, slightly breathless.

"I just wanted to give you a proper hello." she teased.

"Hmm, well I think we can do better than that.."

"Oh really?" El scoffs in mock indignation. "Well show me how you would have done it then."

"With pleasure."

We immediately recommence making out. Except unlike last time, these kisses are not of the sweet and loving variety. It's fierce and hot and passionate and-

"Ugh gross guys, really? Must we be treated to this horrific r-rated movie everyday?" Dustin complained.

As a party, we really do have impeccable timing.

"Hi to you too Dustin." El rolled her eyes good-humouredly.

"Wait, that's all I get? A "hi"? How come Mike got a tongue down his throat and I just get a "hi" ?"

"Ha ha, very funny Dustin." I couldn't match his joking spirit. I was too disappointed about what he interrupted.

"Do you want my tongue down your throat?" El asked sceptically.

"Well no, obviously. But it would be nice to have to option."

"El, we should probably get going, right?" Will walked up to us and looked at his watch.

"Oh yeah, we have to go." She leaned into give me a quick peck. "You're coming over later, right?" she asked me. I opened my mouth to reply when Dustin beat me to the chase.

"Actually we're all coming over. Remember? The science project?"

El looked confused. "Wait what? Since when?"

"Uhh since forever ago! For our final project? Where have you been?" Dustin cried.

El shot Will a worried look. It's literally terrifying how well they can read each other's minds.

"Yeah, remember El? This was all planned ages ago. Hopper knows all about it." Will explained.

"Oh yeah, of course." She replied and shook her head with a smile

that didn't reach her eyes. "I must have just spaced or something. I'll see you guys then." As El and Will said their goodbyes, they started walking towards the parking lot to drive home.

Something wasn't right.

I could feel it in the pit of my stomach.

"Do you think El is ok?" I decided to get a second opinion.

"Uh, seeing as you too were just making out at a terrifying speed, I'm gonna go out on a limb and say she's fine." He smirked.

"Shut up Dustin, I'm serious."

"About what?"

"I think something's wrong with El."

## 2. Chapter 2

**A/N This chapter slightly references another story of mine, We Help Each Other but it still makes sense without it.**

What are you talking about?" Dustin sounds incredibly sceptical but he doesn't know her like I do. She doesn't really do PDA and she never forgets anything.

But just now, as Dustin so eloquently put it, she was just shoving her tongue down my throat. I mean, we were equal contributors, but she started it. Usually she doesn't like to kiss like that in public. And she forgot about the four of us coming over to work on the science project. She never forgets anything, especially seeing as the project is 50% of our final grade. We've all spent so long talking about it, how could she possibly forget? And what about the weird look she gave Will?

And that's just three things that happened in the last five minutes, but she's been slightly out of character for a few days now. The most worrying thing is that I don't think she's sleeping. Her makeup covers the purple eye bags at school but when I came over to the Byers house the other day, she was fresh faced and ready for bed, and she looked pale and sick. I can tell how exhausted she is from the way she's been zoning out in the middle of conversations all week. I desperately want to ask her why she can't sleep, but I'm not allowed.

El and I tell each other everything, except the nightmares. She doesn't know I sometimes I get them, I don't want to worry her. She doesn't tell me about hers for the same reason. And also, she told me once when we were 13 that she could tell me about her nightmares, but I wouldn't understand. Total bullshit, but it's a subject she's never budged on. Every time they get a nightmare, Will and El sit down and analyse it, keeping the contents secret to all. I hate that stupid tradition, because we all saw some crazy shit and we should all be talking about it, but I have to admit how much these heart to hearts have helped both Will and El. Since they've started talking about they're shared experiences in the upside down and the void and whatnot, they don't feel as alone. I wish I could be the one to make El feel like she's not alone, but appears she doesn't require my services

in that department.

Anyway, long story short, I'm not allowed ask about the nightmares. I'm not even allowed to ask if she's had any. I just have to shut up and hope that Will is fixing it.

But she hasn't slept in a week.

I can't just do nothing.

"I don't know, she just seems kinda off."

### 3. Chapter 3

Mike POV

We're all sitting around the Byers living room, brainstorming for our science project. Everyone had really different ideas and everyone was sharing those ideas at crazy volumes, all talking over one another. By everyone, I mostly mean Dustin, Lucas and Max, though to be fair, Will and I played a significant part in the increase of the noise levels too

Sometimes I miss those days when it was just Will, Dustin, Lucas and I. We were always so in sync. The only arguments we had were about stupid mistakes made during D&D. But now with two new female members of the party, one of those being an incredibly loud and opinionated member, the dynamic has totally changed. Even when it is just the four of us boys hanging out, it's different. We've all changed so much over the past few years. It's sad to think about how different everything is, but then I look over at El and remember how truly grateful I am for all those changes. If nothing had changed, I wouldn't know El. The thought terrifies me.

El seems unusually quiet tonight though. She's always quiet, but she's not afraid to join in during these group arguments either. And as much as this fact damaged the egos of us boys when we were 13, El is ridiculously smart when it comes to science. Her brain is logical in a way I didn't think possible. Dustin used to be top of the class, with Will, Lucas and I following close behind, until El started school and left us all behind in the dirt. Dustin refused to talk to her for days, but then we all realised how smart she is and became in awe of her again.

Her passion for science makes this silent behaviour even more usual.

I couldn't take it anymore.

I caught El's eyes and nodded towards the kitchen. The others were shouting so loudly they didn't even notice we were gone.

Once we got to the kitchen and had some semblance of privacy, I

ripped off the band aid.

"Are you okay?" I blurted.

Her poker face flickered for a second as worry begin to seep into her features, but a second later this breach in her armour was gone, and her smile was as deceiving as ever. "Yeah, of course. What do you mean?"

I took her hands in mine and stepped closer to her, bodies almost touching. I looked down into those big brown eyes and began to plead with her. "Please, El, I know something's wrong. I can tell you haven't been sleeping for days and it's killing me to see you like this. Please tell me what's wrong. I'll fix it. Just please tell me."

She inhaled and for a second I thought she was going to lie to me again and tell me everything's ok. But she seemed to realise how stubborn I was going to be about this.

"There's nothing you can do Mike, you can't fix this." she whispered, looking down at our shoes.

I lifted her head up to meet my eyes and stroked her cheeks with my thumbs. "If I can't fix it, then I'll stand with you and be with you every step of the way. Remember, you're basically stuck with me."

"I love being stuck with you."

"I love being stuck with you too." I smiled as she leaned in towards me for a kiss. I could feel her smile lining up against mine and the way her lips were soft and then her tongue started to-

"Are you trying to distract me?" I step back in mock horror.

"Well, is it working?"

"Not anymore. Seriously El, I want to help, but I can't until I know what's happening."

She looked over at the party still arguing in the living room and sighed.



"Well if I have to tell you, I might as well tell everyone else too. I really don't want to have to tell this story twice."

## 4. Chapter 4

A/n I probably should have said this earlier, but it's implied that Hopper and Joyce are together, and El and Hopper live with the Byers.

**More references to one of my old fics We Help Each Other**

**Mike POV**

"El, are you sure you want to do this?" Will asked. We all gathered back in the living when El announced to the party that she had been keeping a secret from everyone.

I made sure to send Dustin an "I told you so" glare. To his credit, he looked like he felt bad about shutting down my concerns earlier today. But still.

Will had apparently been in the loop for the last week and had been urging El to tell everyone else, but she was adamant that it should remain a secret.

"Isn't this what you've tried to make me do for the last week?"

Will started, "Yes but you don't have to tell everyone if you don't think-"

"It's happening. It's story time now." El interrupted.

As desperate as I was to hear this story, I couldn't help feeling a little... crap. I get that Will and El have their arrangement, but El hasn't slept in a week and he knew why but neither of them told me, her boyfriend. And now, when she finally agrees to tell me what happened, she's telling me at the same time as the other idiots in our party. I have to find out what's happening at the same time as everyone else. As her devoted boyfriend, don't I get any privileges?

I mean, as her boyfriend, I get a lot of privileges, but we're not talking about that kind right now.

"Ok, I guess this story really starts 4 years ago." El began.

"Four years ago! I thought this was recent!" I exclaimed.

"Shhh! She's setting the scene dude!" Dustin scolded me.

"Anyway," El continued. "You know how I went to Chicago to meet my sister?"

We all nodded.

"And remember what Kali... wanted me to do, but I couldn't do it?"

More nods.

"Well that lab worker told me and Kali that... he was still alive."

"He?"

"Who's he?"

"You don't mean the demogorgan?"

The audience offered up some questions.

"He told me that... Papa was still alive."

Just saying it robbed El of energy. She began to look scared and tired, and unfortunately, all too like the girl I met in the woods in the rain that first night.

That bastard is still alive? And she's known since she came back years ago? And she didn't tell me? How could she do that to me?

How could she do this herself? Was she carrying this burden with her for four whole years? Why didn't she feel like she could tell me?

Once she said Papa everyone shut up again. She never talks about her time in the lab but we know that she used to refer to Brenner as "Papa". Everyone is so creeped out by the whole situation and her weird familial attachment to him that nobody has any annoying interruptions or questions.

"I didn't know if he was telling the truth or not. I could have found him if he was alive, no problem. But I never looked. Because I was

afraid to. I honestly didn't know if I want him to be dead or alive. Anyway, that was four years ago. For the last month I've been getting dreams that are... weirder than normal, but now, for the last week I haven't slept at all because I'm afraid of what I'll find there."

She looked around at our confused faces and took a deep breath.

"Because last week, a boy my own age was in the void. I remembered him vaguely from the lab, but the void... it's weird and blurry sometimes. I haven't really been able to get a proper look at him. But I know that he, he... has powers like mine. He told me that he knew where Brenner was and he was going to kill him.

"Every night I've gone to sleep he's in the void, wanting to talk to me. But I don't want anything to do with him. But a few days ago, he told me he knew where I was and he was going to come meet me. I told Hopper about him and told the boy to meet Hopper at the station in a couple of days. And I guess we'll see what happens after that."

Everyone was totally silent. How do you even respond to that?

My temper was bubbling just below the surface. Hopper is meeting this guy in a couple of days and El wouldn't have told me about it if I hadn't dragged it out of her?

We all jumped out of our skins when the phone on the wall started ringing. Will gave El a look and then went to answer it.

"Hello?" he asked.

Muffled speech could be heard coming from the phone.

"Yeah we're here. But everyone else is too." he looked around at us, looking worried.

Muffled yelling.

"We were working on our science project and -"

More yelling.

El ran up to Will and grabbed the phone.

"Hop, that doesn't matter now, I told them everything." El said. She sighed. "I know, but I had to! They knew something was wrong!"

I'll like to take this opportunity to point out that no, everyone did not know something was wrong. I knew. Just me.

"It's fine, Hop. They're not going to tell anyone. I'll see you later."

With that, El hung up on Hopper.

"As you can see, Hopper is handling this well."